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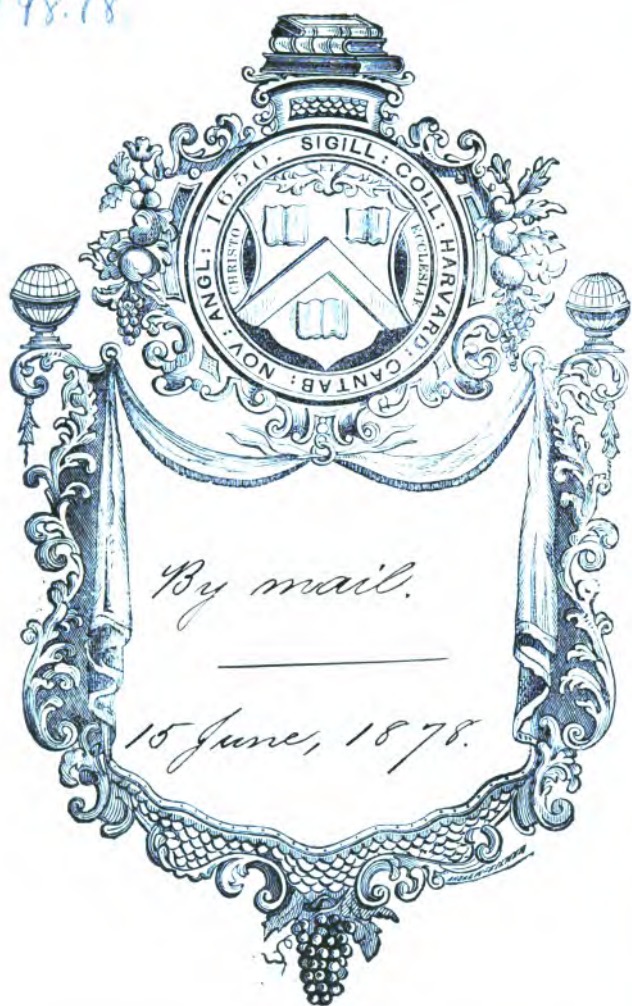
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*Cover*

# CREDIBILITY OF HISTORY.

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ANNUAL ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

JUNE 12, 1878.

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By JOHN T. PERRY,  
*Of the Cincinnati Gazette.*

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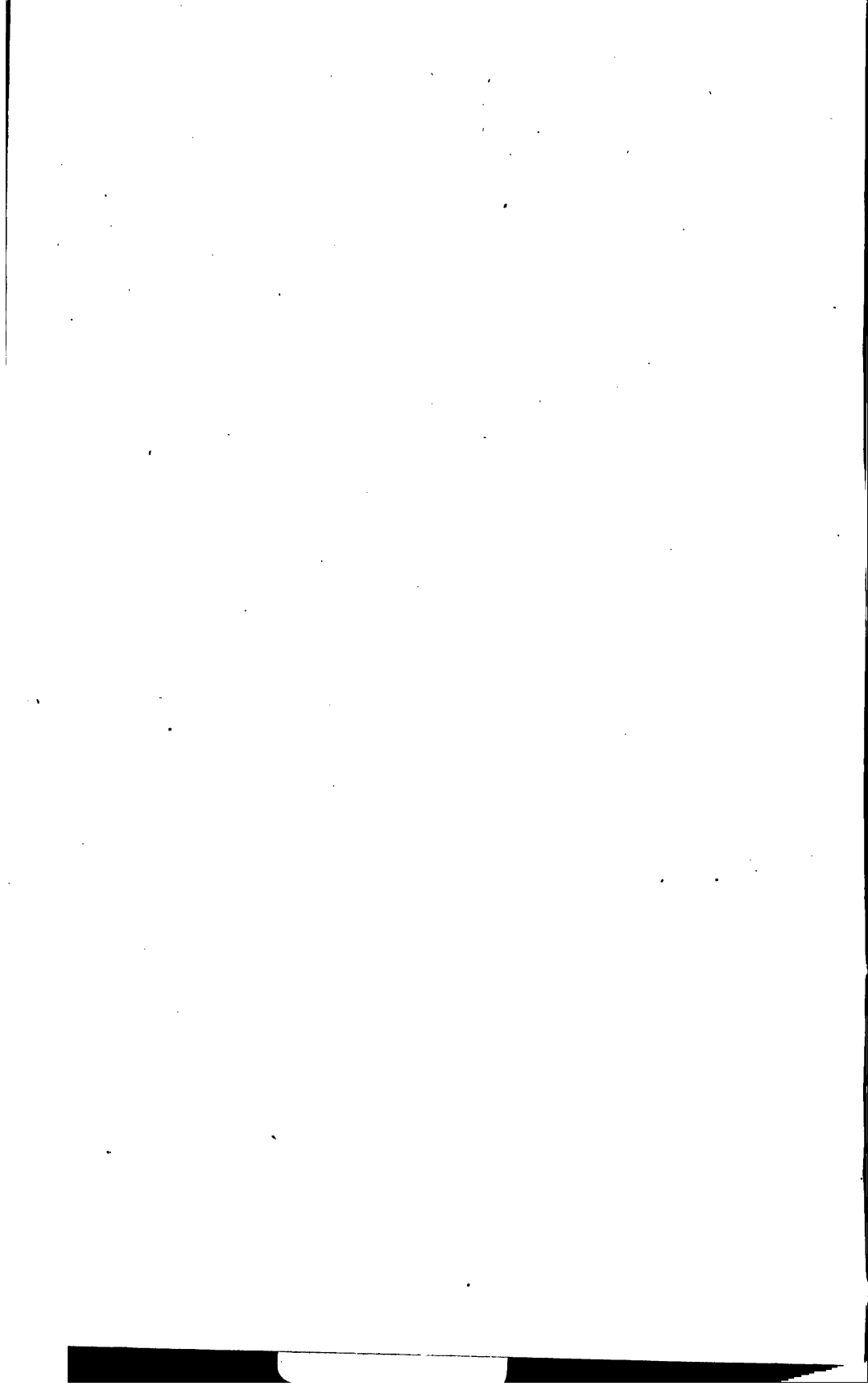
CINCINNATI.

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1878







THE  
CREDIBILITY OF HISTORY.

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1878



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1875. June 15,  
By mail

# THE CREDIBILITY OF HISTORY.

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My subject, if such a distinction can be claimed for a series of rather loosely connected comments on various phases of the past, and their still more varied treatment by modern critics, each of whom gives them a turn in his own kaleidoscope, is

## THE CREDIBILITY OF HISTORY.

It has been said that the historian is a prophet looking backward. In the remotest antiquity a similar, though further reaching distinction, was awarded the poet. The same word was applied to him and to the prophet. This blending of meaning no longer exists; yet the union of functions has not altogether disappeared. Pope certainly wrote for all time when he declared that "The proper study of mankind is man."

But how shall man be studied? Psychologically by placing mind in the witness box and compelling it to be both its own eulogist and accuser; physiologically, with the knife of the anatomist and the microscope of the optician, aided by comparisons of the genus homo with other mammals, and of the man of to-day with the cave dweller; aesthetically, by converting beautiful abstractions and lofty aspirations into entities most shadowy when most charming; or, lastly, shall we judge him by his works?

A dogmatic utterance on the relative importance of any branch of human knowledge can not win universal acceptance; but I shall not be deemed presumptuous by my present audience in ranking history among the sciences.

In establishing this conclusion several differing, if not whole distinct, lines of illustration must be followed. The connecting thread may be slender—sometimes imperceptible. It is to be hoped, however, that the two ends will not be invisible.

What, then, is history? It is distinguished from biography as the whole from the part; it treats of society rather than individuals. Its most approved definition is that bestowed upon it by an ancient Greek writer, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who confessed that he owed the thought at least to Thucydides, viz.: Philosophy teaching by examples. It enables us to judge man by his works; far less perfectly, indeed, but on the same principle, as we are told, the Creator will finally do.

John Ruskin says the facts it is most desirable that a man entering life should know "are, first, where he is; secondly, where he is going; thirdly, what he had best do under these circumstances." The words are the Englishman's, but our own New Hampshire Webster anticipated him by declaring that:

"The earliest and the most urgent intellectual want of human nature is the knowledge of its origin, its duty, and its destiny. 'Whence am I, what am I, and what is before me.' This is the cry of the human soul so soon as it raises its contemplation above visible natural things."

History does not answer all these questions, but it is the best clue to their solution. One great fact it teaches. Times may change, languages may die and be born, seas may be crossed, and empires give place to republics, but man's nature—man himself remains unchanged.

"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

History, then, in recording men's deeds, illustrates the workings of that intellectual and moral constitution, which, though many sided, is always the same. The polished diamond reflects different hues, according as one or the other facet is struck by the solar rays, but it is the same diamond in sunshine as in shade. Its chemical constituents are not destroyed, though it gains luster by the skillful cutting of the workman at Amsterdam. It is pure carbon, just as when taken rough from the mine. So in reviewing the deeds of men, if we would judge them rightly, we must discriminate between the natural and the accidental. We shall, however, more quickly and certainly reach the truth, if we generalize from a wide array of facts, than if we start with preconceived theories of man's moral nature or of the system of the universe.

We may here borrow these words of Frederick Schlegel, in which he contrasts psychology, the fine arts, and history:

"All these are adapted in various ways to to exalt and enrich the inward man. They are in this respect equally indispensable. Yet it is pre-eminently from the study of history that all these endeavors after a higher mental culture derive their

fixed center and support—viz., their common reference to man, his destinies and energies."

This is history in its conception. In its manipulation by unskilled or prejudiced workmen, it is often greatly distorted, and, like the human nature, of which it is the mirror, most conspicuous in its blemishes. "The gownsmen who dwell in cloistered ease," and mistake the figments of their own fancies for the achievements of the busy world without; the venal penegyrists of tyrants and demagogues; those who "waste on party what was meant for mankind;" those literary owls who think the deeds of armies and royal councils alone worthy of record, ignoring social and domestic life, have been altogether too numerous, but, happily, are now going out of fashion.

I have commended the inductive process as the best for studying man, and it should be strictly followed by the historical student. He ought also to borrow Bacon's aspiration—a noble one, though unappreciated by its author when, as Lord Chancellor, he furnished such sad materials for the historians of his time. He says:

"God forbid that we give forth the dream of our fancy as the model of the world, but may He rather vouchsafe us the grace that we may indite a revelation and true version of the march and signs of the Creator impressed upon creation."

There is of course a philosophy of history. It is legitimate for Mr. Lecky or Mr. Buckle to mass facts and events for the sake of indicating their bearing on certain general truths, rather than of chronicling their occurrence. There is danger, however, lest the theoretical get the upper hand of the actual. Mr. Buckle, at least, affords an illustration of the possibility of an able man being carried off by his own hobby. Former writers have underrated physical influences, but he has magnified them at the expense of still more potent forces. Facts—plain, unvarnished facts, are to history what axioms are to geometry. They may be employed as simple landmarks or be used as the foundations of lofty and elaborate structures. The most imposing edifice, if raised without them or by their misplacement, has at best an insecure basis, and must eventually topple over. Dull observers and careless narrators on the one hand, and ambitious theorists on the other, are the chief instruments in perpetuating mistaken views of events.

#### IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

Here is shown the importance, the necessity rather, of an organization like that before which I have been called to speak. The preservation of simple facts, and largely of those which escape the notice of the general student or the collector, forms a leading part of your work. The gathering of relics of the past is a service that can not be overvalued, but the rescue from oblivion of those ephemeral documents and events which are so rapidly transmuted into history, and yet are so speedily forgotten by the mass of the people, is even more important. Had there been historical societies from the first settlement of the North American colonies, saying nothing of remote antiquity and the Eastern hemisphere, much fiction in the guise of history would not have

been written, many a fierce controversy would have been avoided, and many a lawsuit would never have begun. The collection of materials for history is a less ambitious, but no less useful branch of effort than the working up of those materials into volumes. The accumulations of seventeenth century ballads, pamphlets, pasquinades, etc., in the British Museum enabled Macaulay to compose some of the most interesting chapters of his history—chapters the impartiality of which has been less called in question than that of many other sections of his work.

#### IMPARTIALITY.

But there are divisions in historical, as in other labor. Facts must not only be collected, but they must be laid before the reader in connection with other facts, and with their bearings explained. Here trouble is likely to occur, for historians are fallible, and captious readers are only too glad to bring charges of partiality. Yet absolute want of color is as undesirable as it is impossible. Facts should never be suppressed or mutilated, but the author should have a soul. Motley, for example, glows with sympathy for the suffering Netherlands, but no fair critic will accuse him of maligning their Spanish oppressors.

All that the reader can ask is that occurrences should be told as they happened, and that the writer shall not conceal his standpoint. Histories purporting to be written without bias are as dull and unreadable as the educational manuals where no one's prejudices are to be hurt and no one's views to be sustained. Something of the kind has been attempted in our public schools, and rightly enough within reasonable limits.

When carried to the extent proposed by some, however, the expurgating and kiln drying process must prove a lamentable failure. Christianity is an undeniable factor in human progress, be it true or false. Can any man write of it in such a manner as to satisfy both the believer and the skeptic? The Reformation was a most important event: Luther and Calvin were either noble revivers of primitive doctrinal purity, or wicked schismatics. They can not be ignored; neither can they be described in neutral terms. No pupil can study even the most meager account of their careers without forming an opinion. Shall the teacher send off the youthful inquirer with, "Ask your father," or "I must decline to answer sectarian questions," or shall our public school curriculum be restricted to the three R's? I have no plan to suggest. It is, however, fair to remark that if the thoroughly unsectarian and secular schools so much urged by politicians, anxious to please all sides, are to be established, no history can be taught in them.

The true impartiality is that professed by Tacitus. He wrote, he says, without hate as without love. This may be true as regards persons. No writer, however, more plainly shows his indignation at wrong and his admiration of right, while recording with judicial impartiality each man's deeds. Men are generally truthful in speaking and writing, unless swayed by some mean passion or narrow prejudice. Historians have more frequently erred through a lack of mental breadth and analytic power than

through intentional unfairness. They have either allowed themselves to be tied by the bonds of party and sect, or have adopted Dr. Dwight's plan in his so called epic, the Conquest of Canaan. In this poem, the hero, Joshua, is stripped of all distinctively Hebraic characteristics and endowed with those glittering generalities which pass for heroic in every age. No such Joshua ever lived, and it is not wonderful that the doctor's eclecticism found few admirers, and that his epic was virtually forgotten long before he passed away.

As absolutely perfect history has never been written, and our theory has consequently lacked full realization; is its validity to be denied? Seba Smith wrote a book in refutation of geometry, because no one had ever seen a line without breadth, or a point lacking both length and breadth. But the science is still taught in our schools, and everywhere forms the basis of important practical calculations. A whole army of Diogeneses, each provided with a calcium light instead of an ordinary lantern, would fail to find a perfect man; is perfection therefore a delusion? There is hardly a historian of eminence whose works have not been more or less assailed: and generally, some vulnerable points have been found. Yet no honest critic has failed to see that in narratives of comparatively recent events, truth is greatly in excess of error. Posterity detects and refutes the falsehoods of the angry partisan scribblers who rise up in every excited epoch, and it turns a deaf ear to the theorists who strive to unsettle well established opinion. Who has ever been convinced by Horace Walpole's historical brief that Richard III. was more sinned against than sinning, or who has set down Columbus as a master of cruelty because a recent writer, whose name I am glad to forget, has published a volume to convict him of piracy and other heinous crimes? *Ancient* authors have not fared so well. Within the last hundred years the assault has been extended to the very foundations of history, and, as extent of time seems alone enough to make records mythical, we may expect that our own era will be treated as at least semi-fabulous by the critics of 2878, if the refining process goes on for the next ten centuries.

When the existence of certain pre-Christian writers has been conceded, they have often been set down as romancers or virtual simpletons, but we may perhaps find good reason for believing that, like the men of to-day, they tried to tell the truth, and had common sense, though sometimes prejudiced and credulous—defects not unknown in the afternoon of the nineteenth century.

This is an age of intellectual, as well as civil upheaval. Old beliefs, as well as old institutions, are closely scrutinized, and sappers and miners are hard at work. We are not of those who believe that chaos is to return, or that, like the French revolutionists of 1792, the wise men of to-day must reject everything that savors of antiquity. The world is making progress, and disintegration may be a needed preliminary to the reconstruction of some of our beliefs. But, after all, the chief modification will be required in our *views* of facts and not in the facts themselves. Let us

examine the claims of history as they have been menaced by two most formidable assailants; study the latter's tactics; weigh the results of the battles thus far fought, and see if the attacking parties are as completely masters of the field as their bulletins, often sent out at the opening of the conflict, have proclaimed them to be.

#### THE MYTHICAL THEORIES.

First, the *mythical* theory in its manifold forms has been pushed to an extreme for the sake of discrediting history. As might be supposed, it has been chiefly applied to ancient writers and traditions, for what is recent is generally too firmly established to offer any hope to the destructionists. We use the word mythical in a wider sense than it is often employed. Strictly speaking, the myth is distinguished from the fable and parable in not being the result of conscious invention. It may vary from the legend in having no historical basis. If we may believe writers like Mueller, Grote, Tylor, and John Fiske, there was a time when men were mythopoetic—that is, myth makers. In their simplicity and spontaneity of mind they imagined divinities as existing in earth, sea, and sky, and worked up the most elaborate personifications without being conscious of the process.

John Fiske (Origins of Folk Lore) defines a myth as "in its origin an explanation by the uncivilized mind of some natural phenomenon; not an allegory, not an esoteric symbol—for the ingenuity is wasted which strives to detect in myths the remnants of a refined primeval science—but an explanation. Primitive men had no profound science to perpetuate by means of allegory, nor were they such sorry pedants as to talk in riddles when plain language would have served their purpose. Their minds, we may be sure, worked like our own, and when they spoke of the far darting sun god, they meant just what they said, save that where we propound a scientific theory, they constructed a myth."

Mr. Fiske and his school find solar myths everywhere, and trace them back to those mysterious Aryans, of whose race, as well as religion, the London Times humorously pronounces Max Mueller the founder. They have discovered that the story of Hamlet is only a symbol of the conflict between summer and winter; and that not in Switzerland merely, but in nearly half a dozen countries, has there been a William Tell in tradition, but without actual existence. Other results no less surprising have been reached to which we shall refer in the proper place.

Of this mythical theory, par excellence, it may be said that, granting it a reasonable amount of truth, it is untenable in its extreme form. It reverses natural processes. If an event has occurred, it is easy to see how it may be misunderstood, amplified and distorted in course of time. It may finally reach a stage of exaggeration in which the ideal completely overlays the real, but there was fact at the start. There are stories in the folk lore of many countries of a woman who was buried alive and restored to consciousness by thieves cutting off one of her fingers to get possession of a valuable ring she wore. Is it not more probable that all these slightly vary

ing traditions of a not impossible occurrence are based on fact than that they are the expression of some old time mythical principle? The dog who killed the serpent by the infant's cradle, and being covered with blood was slain by his master on suspicion of having eaten his charge; the falcon who dashed the poisoned cup from the King's hand and was put to death before it was discovered that he was trying to save his life, are different versions of what is more likely to have happened than to have come down through the clouds. If all men sprang from a common source, or if many modern races had Aryan ancestors, it is altogether likely that the memory of remarkable occurrences even in the earliest ages, would be handed down through a long succession of generations. It is hard to believe that the primitive races had so much of the philosophic sense as to personify their abstract conceptions, and yet be stupidly unconscious of what they were doing. It is easier to suppose that the unenlightened masses lost the real sense of traditions and of the allegorical teachings of their priests and philosophers.

As regards the Grecian mythology, we have the plain statement of Herodotus, B. C. 450, "Whence each of the gods sprung, whether they existed always, and of what form they were, was, so to speak, unknown till yesterday. For I am of opinion that Hesiod and Homer lived four hundred years before my time, and not more; and those poets framed a theogony for the Greeks, and gave names to the gods, and assigned to them honors and arts, and declared their several forms."—[Book ii., 53.

Another school of writers finds the old time veneration of the reproductive principle the foundation of many a devoutly cherished fancy. Astronomical allegory was the key with which some writers of the last century strove to unlock the door to every mystery, and their wild explanations seem to be regaining their lost reputation in our own day. Others still, who can hardly be reckoned among mythical champions, though they are their near relatives, are lynx eyed in detecting the age and surroundings of an author by his style, and what they are pleased to call his "tendency." They carry their theory as far, and as absurdly as Mr. George Wilkes, who, in his recent volume on Shakespeare, attempts to prove the great dramatist a Roman Catholic, because he has made some of his characters profess their devotion to the papal establishment or enunciate its doctrines. Given an author's age, he must have written so and so, and if he rises above his contemporaries, and anticipates even so imperfectly the ideas of a future generation, it is held to be most likely that his reputed works are not genuine.

In short, we are asked on different, but kindred theories, to reject ancient statements—that is, history—unless supported by overwhelming evidence. The rules of our courts do not hold here, for the defendant is presumed to be guilty until he has demonstrated his innocence. It is not pleasant to believe that the mass of early historians were such clever rascals that they succeeded in deceiving their contemporaries and all subsequent generations up to near our own

times. Are the records of the past generally true, subject to reasonable qualification in view of human infirmity, or are they mere moon (we mean sun) shine and creative symbols?

#### CANONS OF JUDGMENT.

Vincent of Lerins, an early church authority, declared worthy of unquestioned acceptance whatever doctrine had been believed everywhere, always, and by all. So when we find a well nigh universal human tradition, varying in details, yet identical in essence, we set it down as true. If it appears to embody objective fact, we may pronounce it historical or semi-historical, without being always as confident as Euhemerus of our ability to separate the husk from the kernel. If it merely typifies a moral or intellectual principle, we recognize its subjective truth.

If the historical substrata of two or more distinct narratives are akin, the simplest and most reasonable form is to be accepted as the earliest. Men forget facts at least as often as they pile up legends, and modern research, especially in the line of archaeology, is playing sad havoc with the theories of the myth doctors. Could the old writers, who have been so roughly handled by them, return to earth, they would have ample satisfaction in seeing how frequently the tables have been completely turned on their maligners.

#### WOLF AND HIS SCHOOL.

A little less than a century ago Frederick Augustus Wolf, a famous German Professor, broached the theory that Homer was a myth; the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* being the songs of various rhapsodists, finally collected. This was flying in the face of all ancient tradition, and of all written history. It aroused much opposition, but made many converts. It gained a still greater number of half way adherents. These were willing to admit that the story of the Trojan war was wholly mythical, or at best nine-tenths legendary, while it was quite possible that the two epics were mainly the work of one author. When Wolf wrote, philological criticism was in its infancy and archaeology was no further advanced. With their progress the reaction from his extreme views would have been more rapid had it not suited the German mind to be skeptical. Niebuhr applied the mythical system to Roman history. Our ancestors believed in the general truthfulness of Livy and the other Latin historians. Of course they did not credit the alleged celestial parentage and lupine adoption of Romulus and Remus. Still, with a judicious application of the rationalizing process, they felt that the Roman writers could be trusted. Niebuhr, however, borrowing the thunder of Wolf, spread the mythical veil over all the earlier periods of Roman growth. Strauss meanwhile sought to resolve the narratives of the Four Evangelists into myths, and wherever the hypothesis would not precisely fit, magnified variations of expression or detail into positive contradictions, and so used one writer to annihilate the others.

The fashionable sun myth process was found to be happily applicable to Homer. The events

described in the *Iliad* were only repetitions of what had been detailed in the *Rig Veda*, but actually dated back to "a period preceding the dispersion of the Aryan nations." So thought Max Mueller and Mr. John Fluke, and they may not have changed their minds. "It is disheartening," wrote the latter in 1870 in a review of Mr. Gladstone's *Juventus Mundi*, "at the present day, and after so much has been finally settled by writers like Grote, Mommsen, and Sir G. C. Lewis, to come upon such views [Mr. Gladstone's belief that Agamemnon, Achilles, Paris, et al. were actual personages] in the work of a man of scholarship and intelligence. One begins to wonder how many more times it will be necessary to prove that dates and events are of no historical value, unless attested by nearly contemporary evidence. \* \* \* The belief that there was a Trojan war rests exclusively upon the contents of those poems; there is no other independent testimony to it whatever."

Mr. Fiske proceeds to show how the chief personages in the *Iliad* are solar personifications, but he concedes that this "does not forbid the supposition that the legend, as we have it, may have been formed by the crystallization of mythical conceptions about a nucleus of genuine tradition."

You all know how, during the last few years, a zealous countryman of Wolf, and 'by naturalization our fellow citizen—Dr. Schliemann—has demonstrated, if not the literal truth of the non-supernatural part of much of Homer's narrative, its historic basis. He has shown that Ilium existed; that it was burned; that Homer was wonderfully accurate in his topographical descriptions and allusions—much more so than could be expected from one writing a poem a century or two after the siege. Dr. Schliemann has also possibly discovered the remains of the murdered Agamemnon, at Mycenæ, surrounded by those of his fellow victims. Mr. Fiske has abundant reason for being disheartened, not at Mr. Gladstone's credulity, but at his own speculations. Whether or not Dr. Schliemann is justified in all that he claims, he has developed most important facts, and opened the door to many more. He has confirmed the general truth of ancient tradition as embodied in the writings of men like Pausanias and Strabo, while Capt. Burton, in Midian, Dr. Curtius, in his labors at Olympia, Constantin Caropana, at Dodona, and Mr. Wood in his excavation of the temple of Diana, at Ephesus, have also shown triumphantly that the old chroniclers were as faithful as any modern reporters or historians could be. It is better to walk on the ground with common men than to mount in the balloons of speculation until the fierce beams of the sun blind the eyes.

Rome is little behind Greece in yielding unpalatable fruit for the myth finders. They have set down the kings as fabulous personages, though the *Cloaca Maxima* was before their eyes to remind them that there must be a very substantial basis of fact to ancient traditions. The government explorations are every year developing new facts or recalling old ones to shake their doubts. The Servian wall, the Circus Maximus, and the Capitoline Temple unite with the wonderful sewer in illustrating the greatness and wealth of the Eternal City in its alleged mythical

age. As Goldwin Smith adds to the mention of the above evidences: "That Rome was comparatively great and wealthy is certain. We can hardly doubt that she was a seat of industry and commerce, and that the theory which represents her industry and commerce as having been developed subsequently to her conquests is the reverse of the fact. Whence but from industry and commerce could the population and the wealth have come?"

It is not my purpose to analyze Strauss' skepticism. It is enough to say that his precise hypothesis is no longer in credit even in Germany. He has had numberless successors, each desirous of killing Christianity in his own way. At last accounts the New Testament was better known and appreciated than either of their systems, which are more destructive of each other than of the object of their common hostility.

#### THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR CRITICS.

One might cite Archbishop Whately's ingenious argument to show that Napoleon Bonaparte must be a myth, by applying the same principles of reasoning to his wonderful career as Strauss has done to that of Christ, and various historical theorists to secular events, but it comes nearer home to notice a queer coincidence that attracted my observation, and which I recorded at the time in the paper with which I am connected. You know that each of the four evangelists gives the inscription on the cross in slightly varying words. This has frequently been adduced as an evidence of their lack of information, unreliability, and even of the uncertain occurrence of the event described. The fairness of these deductions is happily illustrated by a superscription of our own time, recorded by four men, who, if not evangelists, were neither impostors nor myths. Capt. Lahrbusch, who died in New York, April 3, 1877, at the reported age of 111, was buried on the 5th of the same month. His funeral was held in a church, and was attended by the representatives of four different papers. Each of these appears to have read the inscription on the coffin plate, but no one of them quotes it in precisely the same words. The Herald reporter said it was as follows: "Frederick Lahrbusch died April 3, 1877, aged 111 years." The World had it "Frederick Lahrbusch born 9th March, 1766; died 3d April, 1877." In the Tribune it appeared, "Frederick Lahrbusch, born March 9, 1766; died April 3, 1877." Finally the Times published it as "Frederick Lahrbusch, born 9th of March, 1766; died 3d of April, 1877."

Shall we conclude from these discrepancies, fully as important as those of the evangelists, that the reporters were writers from hearsay, wicked impostors, or that Captain Lahrbusch was never buried? We certainly have the right to take our choice of these suppositions, or even lump them all together, if we follow the precedents set by some reputedly astute biblical critics. One or two of the results of the wild scheme of astronomical allegory first enunciated by Dupuis in his *Origin of Religions*, near the close of the last century; popularized by Volney in his *Ruins*; adapted with variations; and more or less fully by Sir William Drummond in his *Ædipus Judaicus*; by

Godfrey Higgins in that vast muddle of undigested learning, the *Anacalypsis*; repeated ad nauseam by men of feeblor minds and even greater anti-Christian malignity, and galvanized into new life by some writers of our own day, may be cited.

The mere mention of a point or two is enough to expose the absurdity of the school. While its representatives have adduced some curious facts showing a connection between the religious and astronomical theories of the ancients, they have distorted mythology and philology to an almost incredible degree. They have strained verbal resemblances in names to the utmost, and inverted the pyramid by basing the mythology of nations on the zodiacal signs instead of treating these signs as being invested with conceptions borrowed from previously existing beliefs. When they tell us that our Saviour was merely a type of the sun, His mother the constellation Virgo, and His death and resurrection the sun's passage from the winter to the vernal solstice, they are confronted by the positive testimony of Tacitus to the reality of His existence; by the sufferings of thousands of martyrs who would not have laid down their lives for an astronomical fable; by the spread through the Roman Empire of doctrines heretofore unheard of, and contrary alike to Judaic formalism and to every school of heathen philosophy. If astromony, either literally or figurately taught, worked such transformations against most formidable obstacles, eighteen centuries ago, it is singular that its miraculous powers have been so entirely lost.

The exploration of the Roman catacombs is throwing a constantly increasing flood of light upon the early history of the Church, and confirming the accuracy of the histories, sacred and profane, that have come down to us. Their miles on miles of streets lined with the tombs of those who sacrificed their all for their faith bring before us the lives, beliefs, and sufferings of the early Christians as vividly as do those of Pompeii the ways of their unbelieving Roman contemporaries. Had Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny never written a line, we should have in these subterraneous passages confirmations of Holy Writ that would put Dupuis and his followers to the blush, if that were not a physical process against which they are wholly proof. Of Inman and his unclean phallic crew I will only say that they gloat over the details of abominations briefly noticed and sternly reprehended by the Hebrew prophets, but have been unable to fix them upon Judaism except when Jews turned their backs on Jehovah to adore Bael and Astarte.

We are not lecturing on Scripture except to illustrate historical evidence in general by what has been alleged in regard to one important department. We must, therefore, content ourselves with a passing allusion to the discoveries of the lamented George Smith respecting the Chaldean legends of the creation, fall of man, and the deluge. They are wonderfully like those of the Pentateuch, though lacking their simplicity, coherence, and beauty. It seems plain that the Hebrew version is the original. Though the other is at least as old as Abraham, Moses must have had access to still earlier documents. Some late writers have attempted to ap-

ply the evolutionary process to Judaism, making its peculiar monotheism a late attainment, but the Chaldee tablets, much less their Hebrew prototype, can not be ascribed to the time of Ezra. The comparison of mythologies would lead us too far from our proper subject, but we repeat the proposition that when varying accounts exist, the simplest must be the oldest, unless it be a revised and rationalized version; and this process always betrays itself.

The mythical and tendency theories as applied to the New Testament are too technical for consideration here. It is enough to say that no two writers of this school are agreed as to what is myth and what is fact, as to what is genuine and what is interpolated. Much dust has been raised over the period of the composition of the gospels, but no critic has been able to show how or when the early church was made to believe that some forged gospel or epistle was apostolic, though no such uncertainty attends the discovery that any apocryphal book was temporarily and partially accepted and eventually rejected. If the same tests were applied to the classics as to the canon, no one could be sure of the genuineness of many works whose genuineness has never been questioned.

The fallibility of the tendency and mythical theorists was very happily exposed in Germany a few years after the publication of Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, and of other works in which the origin of the New Testament books was examined from the point of view of their style by modern critics lynx eyed in detecting an anti-Judaic element, to which the Church of the first four and the next twelve centuries was blind. William Meinhold, a North German pastor, resolved to put their acumen to the test. He produced what claimed to be a romance worked up from an old manuscript of the seventeenth century found in his church. The "Amber Witch," as it was called, told in antiquated language how a minister's daughter, during the Thirty Years' War, came near being burned at the stake. She could not satisfactorily account for a large amount of amber which she had found, and was believed to have obtained it through witchcraft. The book was submitted to various rationalistic experts. To a man they indorsed the genuineness of the narrative, finding in it all the evidences of real antiquity. When told that it was Meinhold's composition, they became virtuously angry, and denounced him in no measured terms for his want of truthfulness.

#### FORGOTTEN AFRICAN DISCOVERIES.

Geographers of the stay at home order may not strictly rank with mythical theorists, yet they have often sacrificed fact for fancy as needlessly and absurdly as the men just mentioned. They have preferred their own guesses to the records of hard working and truthful explorers. Africa has especially suffered at their hands. Had the theoretical compilers of maps and treatises given due credit to the statements of the ancients and of the early Portuguese missionaries and traders, the lives of many modern travelers might perhaps have been saved. At all events their journeyings would have been less

hap hazard. We find even Dr. Livingstone—by no means to be ranked with the library chair authorities—constantly dilating on the mistakes and deficiencies of the Portuguese writers.

Most of you have seen in a late number of Harper's Weekly a facsimile of a map of the African continent, published in 1626, which is a much better representation of the country than any published between 1750 and 1850. It is not wholly correct, for the Niger is made to flow into the Atlantic through the Senegal and Gambia, instead of reaching it, after making a great circle, in the Gulf of Guinea. The equatorial lakes, which are the sources of the Nile, are located several degrees too far south, and the Congo is erroneously represented as sharing one of these fountains, but there is an approximation to the great lacustrine system rediscovered within the last dozen years. The mistakes are by no means as misleading as the solid rampart of Mountains of the Moon that was drawn across the continent in the atlas I studied at school, and are greatly preferable to the area of "unexplored regions" which has appeared on all charts until within a very brief period. The map reproduced in Harper was not original, for the facts it embodies are to be found in still earlier compositions of its class. It is not topography alone that has been forgotten through the conceit of geographers. Much of what Stanley has recently learned at such great pains; the stories of the gorilla which Du Chaillu was pronounced a romancer for telling, and many other interesting data, are included in the collections of voyages and travels published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In illustration of this fact I make a few quotations from Anstey's Voyages, published in 1744-46, premising that not a few of them had already appeared in the earlier compilations of Purchas, Dapper, Harris, and others.

Anstey cites Battel as writing of a foray of the Jaghers to the west coast in 1589: "The prisoners were brought into the camp alive, and the dead bodies eaten by the Jaghers, who are the greatest cannibals in the world; delighting in man's flesh, though there were plenty of cattle." These Jaghers were the ancestors of the cannibals whom Stanley encountered on the upper Congo. Their location is properly indicated on the old maps, and there are frequent accounts of their expeditions. They took the capital, Banza Congo, or San Salvador as the Portuguese call it, and speedily erected their human shambles.

Of the Pigmies, known to the Romans, but thought mythical by the moderns, until Schweinfurth encountered some of them a few years ago, we are told in Anstey's synopsis of Dapper and others: "To the northeast of Mani Keské, a prince living eight days east of Cape Negro, in Loango, are a pigmy people called Matembas, no taller than boys of twelve years old, but very thick. They live only on flesh, which they kill in the woods with their bows and arrows. They pay tribute to Mani Keské, in elephants' teeth and tails, and their women use bows and arrows as well as the men, and one of them will walk the woods alone and kill the Pongos, or great baboons, with their poisoned arrows."

Here is a mention of the gorillas (or Pongos) and

there are descriptions of them in the same work, and a picture of one side by side with that of a chimpanzee, the two creatures being carefully distinguished. Had people twelve or fifteen years ago remembered what they were told by honest, if old fashioned eye witnesses, Du Chaillu would not have ranked as a Munchausen until his truthfulness was made apparent by the arrival of both dead and live gorillas in this country and Europe. We quote again from Anstey:

Battel says; "In the woods about Mayomba, in the kingdom of Loango, there are two sorts of monsters; the greater called Pongo and the lesser Eujoka. The former is proportioned exactly like a man, but of a larger size and very tall. The face is like that of a man, but hollow eyed. There is no hair on his hands, ears, or face, except his brows, where it is very long. His body is covered with hair, though not thick, of a dun color. He differs only from a man by his legs, which have no calf. He always goes erect, and carries his hands on the nape of his neck when he walks. They sleep in trees, and build shelters from the rain, living upon what fruit or nuts the woods yield, for they eat no flesh. \* \* \* The Pongos are never taken alive, being so strong that ten men can not hold one of them, but the natives take many of their young by killing the dam."

The author here quoted may not be scientifically correct in his details, but he certainly saw gorillas, or was familiar with their general nature and habits through trustworthy informants.

We might continue these extracts to great length, but we restrict ourselves to one more. You are perhaps aware that since the discovery of diamonds has attracted so many European adventurers to Southeastern Africa, splendid stone structures have been found west of Sofola—supposed by many to be Solomon's Ophir. These buildings, which no ordinary negro could have built, are akin to the Cyclopean edifices, the product of early Hamite skill. The surprise of the diamond hunters was also experienced by a military chieftain named Barreto, a kind of Portuguese Cortes, two centuries and a half ago. The old chroniclers are not silent in regard to them. Lopez says: "In the countries of Monomatapa there remain many ancient structures of great labor and singular architecture, built with stone, lime, and timber, the like whereof are not to be seen in all the provinces adjoining." He thence conjectures that Solomon might have had his gold from this quarter. Another writer tells that: "In the Mount Assur, near Massapo (that is, south of the river Zambesi), are seen the remains of stately buildings, supposed to be palaces and castles."

#### HISTORY AND SCIENCE.

I pass to the second great antagonist of history. In our own days the claims of history are being denied as a whole, or at least relegated to a very circumscribed place by the radical advocates of certain branches of physical science—of all embracing science, with the biggest kind of an S, as they would have the world believe. Physical phenomena can not explain everything, but its established data must prove invaluable aids in forming our estimates



of the world and its inhabitants. If the Baconian order is not abandoned, and facts are not adjusted to meet the exigencies of a preconceived hypothesis, important results may be reached. It may be well nigh impossible to avoid guessing at the outcome of an unfinished process, but the truly scientific mind is judicial rather than imaginative. It is constructive, but it postpones building until it has collected a sufficiency of material.

It is often alleged that there is a conflict between theology and science, that the former has ever represented blind prejudice, while the latter is the consistent champion of truth for truth's sake. President White, of Cornell University, has written a little volume to show how theology has always been opposed to science, and how science has invariably conquered. He seems to assume that science is an unchangeable entity, that all the unreasoning passion is on his opponents' side, and to forget that a great many important discoveries have been made by men whose devotion to religion was the ruling principle of their nature. Herbert Spencer is more candid, for he recognizes the existence of an *odium anti theologicum*, as well as of an *odium theologicum*. Both may well be dispensed with, but if the representatives of current beliefs have often been unduly timid, the overthrow of their convictions has as often been proclaimed with an arrogance and exultation little calculated to allay opposition, much less to effect conversion. Further, science has taken many false steps. Not to mention individual mistakes, the French Academy has declared at various times against the use of quinine; against vaccination; against lightning rods; against the steam engine, and against the existence of meteorolites. Twenty-five years ago the man who dared assert within ear shot of Harvard College that all men were descended from a single pair was regarded as much more orthodox than enlightened. Yet, when Prof. Agassiz died he left very few disciples. As far as geology is concerned, it is enough to say that no two of the half dozen or more editions of Lyell's treatise agree. The changes that he made may be ascribed to progress, but it is a fact, as we shall soon see, that there is a tendency to return to some of the earlier theories.

Specialists in the different departments of natural science evince no little jealousy when their fields are invaded. They deny the competency of any man to have an opinion, even, who has not become minutely acquainted with all their products. To this it may be answered, first, that a specialist may gather details without being competent to generalize from them. A man may be a skillful miner of gold and silver, and yet be a child in the laws of finance. His views on strata and shafts may supply valuable information, and be intelligible to those who could not work them to advantage. Second, we do not observe that these specialists are careful to keep within their own bounds. They boldly advance into the dominions of speculation, and are not at all reluctant to pass judgment on questions which lie entirely within the jurisdiction of the novelist, metaphysician or historian.

As they have raised an issue with history on some important points we will glance at the matters

in dispute. The theory of evolution, in the special form required by the Darwinian hypothesis, and in its wider statement which endows it with all the power of Omnipotence, consciousness excepted, has won the favor of scientific men, while a still greater number accept it as the most intelligent explanation of the plan on which the Deity has worked, and as accounting for the existence of partially developed or obsolete organs, heretofore unaccounted for. There are other plausible arguments for its truth, which will no doubt suggest themselves to you. It is admitted, however, on all sides that there are great gaps to be filled, especially when the hypothesis is applied to man. His ascent from the brutes is a matter of pure speculation; so is the transformation of inorganic into organic matter, and so also is the transmutation of one species of organized being into another. If the changes have occurred they have been incredibly slow, and none have taken place within the memory of man.

The relations of evolution to humanity are the only ones with which we are now concerned. The earlier geologists conceded that our race had recently appeared on the earth, and that the great periods preceding man's creation were separated by catastrophic eras, in which countless lower species of existences had perished, giving place to others with whom they had no connection. Human remains have been discovered, however, under circumstances which seem to indicate a much greater antiquity than was formerly supposed. When evolution was suggested as the substitute of direct creation, this last discovery was utilized. The origin of man was put back hundreds of thousands of years, while millions more were demanded for his slow development through lower types of creation. Catastrophic geology was abandoned, and the uniformitarian theory took its place. If evolution was the sole influence at work there must be comparatively smooth sailing from beginning to end. At all events, there must be no breaks. If man sprang from the brutes then he must have begun his human career as a savage. Confirmation of this was alleged to exist in the skeletons or parts of skeletons lying in European caves and gravel drifts in close proximity to the remains of animals long since extinct in that part of the world, and to others which have disappeared from the face of the earth. According as rough stone, polished stone, or copper weapons or utensils lay near human remains, the latter were pronounced representatives of the palæolithic, polished stone, or bronze ages—a classification first established by Danish experts. In our own country, traces of human existence have been discovered which are ascribed to a very early period. The so called Calaveras skull, dug from a mining shaft in Table Mountain, California, is believed by Professor Whitney to belong to the Pliocene epoch, but the majority of the best geologists declare that the earliest date of man's existence thus far proved is the Champlain epoch of the quaternary period, a very much later time than that claimed by Professor Whitney on very slender grounds. Professor Le Conte, of California, estimates that man

came on earth from ten to fifty thousand years ago—more probably the latter. Mr. Croll and other astronomical and mathematical authorities have shown that the age of the earth must be much less than the many myriads of years formerly attributed to it.

#### A RETURN TO OLD THEORIES.

There is also a marked tendency of late on the part of geologists to readopt the catastrophic theory, at least in part. Le Conte has employed the word unconformity to designate the periods of disturbance which separate those of comparative repose. Though he does not like to admit that there have been actual breaks in the chain of existence which would prove fatal to evolution, he says: "In all speculation on the origin of the animal kingdom by evolution, it is very necessary to bear in mind this *lost interval*, for it has evidently a great duration." He has special reference here to the disappearance of the Laurentian rocks, but his words have a wider bearing.

Clarence King, in his address before the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale College, last summer, argues forcibly for the necessity of catastrophe as an explanation of the wonderful formations of Colorado and California. He speaks of the ultra uniformitarianism as persons "whose dominant characteristic is a positive refusal to look further than the present, or to conceive conditions which their senses have never reported. \* \* They suffer from a species of intellectual nearsightedness too lamentably common in all grades and professions of men. \* \* They have saturated themselves with the present *modus operandi* of geological energy, and culminating in Lyell have founded the British school of Uniformitarianism." He objects to "sweeping catastrophism as an error of the past," but instances many periods in the history of canons and mountain chains, of which it is the only adequate explanation. His utterances are the more important because he still believes that "He who brought to bear that mysterious energy we call life upon primeval matter, bestowed, at the same time, a power of development by change, arranging that the interaction of energy and matter which make up environment should, from time to time, burst in upon the current of life, and sweep it onward and upward to even higher and better manifestations." The admissions of a thorough going evolutionist are valuable, however satisfactory his attempts at reconciling his concessions with his theories may be. He regards the later periods as eras of comparative quiet, and so indeed they are.

Still modern history is not wanting in instances of wondrous changes wrought by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The rise of the volcano of Jorullo in the last century produced greater changes in the surface of a wide district in Mexico than ordinary causes could have effected in thousands of years. The erosion of water has changed the line of coasts within the memory of two or three generations. Yet man, as man, has not been modified since history began, and prehistoric skulls, with perhaps the exception of that known as the Neanderthal, show no exceptionally low or brutish characteristics. The flat shin bones of the cave men of Europe are to

be found among the American Indians of our day, and the general type of the cave dweller is very nearly that of the modern Esquimaux. Professor Whitney's Calaveras skull is denied the antiquity which he claims for it, by the Darwinians, because it looks like that of a Mexican Indian, and if we may carry out Mr. King's ideas to their legitimate conclusion, it may have been buried by an earthquake in a comparatively recent period. Palaeontology reveals then no essential changes in man.

#### ANTIQUITY OF MAN.

The proofs of his antiquity must be found in the formations in which his earliest remains have been discovered. Calculations based on the rate of deposit in the streams and deltas of rivers are of very little force, since nearly every river is a law unto itself. You may have heard that the Mississippi is constantly changing its course, now eating into one bank and then into the other; here cutting and there abandoning a channel. No pilot who has been off duty for a year is allowed to return to work until he has made one or two trips of inspection. Island No. 10, so famous during the war as a base of operations, was half washed away when I passed it in March, 1874. Lyell claimed for the delta of this river an antiquity of hundreds of thousands of years, while the American Coast Survey reduced its age to about 4,500 years. The rate of progress has probably not been uniform. The delta of the Po has advanced twenty miles since the Christian era, while the Nile delta is estimated to be making much slower progress. The process may be rapid or gradual according to circumstances. Not many years ago the gunwale of a flat boat with an auger hole bored through it was discovered about twenty feet under ground, at Port Jackson on the Mississippi. Mr. Fontaine, who chronicles the fact, says that the age of no fossil found in the alluvium of the present delta of Louisiana can be determined.

The accretion of stalagmite is equally variable. In a well at Aix les Bains, Savoy, into which the Romans were accustomed to throw votive offerings, coins of the time of Nero were found under several inches of stalagmite, while between them and other offerings of a far earlier period there was another accumulation of the same kind. Yet the advocates of uniformitarianism call upon us to concede an equal and always slow growth for deposits like these, and are unwilling to admit that its rate could change through countless centuries.

It is now well known that the lake dwellings of Switzerland, for which the date of 7,000 years before Christ was thought not extravagant, were used at least as late as the Christian era. Indeed their counterparts were seen in Africa by Lieut. Cameron three or four years ago. The existence of the stone bronze and iron ages as long, successive and universal periods can not be maintained. Africa, according to Dr. Livingstone, never had a stone age, iron having been worked there from time immemorial. In our own days, and such appears to have frequently been the case even among the prehistoric men, savages use rough stone, polished stone, and metallic weapons and tools at the same time.

There is good reason for supposing that many of the savage beasts now confined to Asia and Africa survived in Europe to a period that may be called prehistoric only because European civilization post dated that of Asia, the cradle of the race. We know that the great Irish elk, by many regarded as the contemporary of the mammoth, still existed in the twelfth century of the Christian era, and a comparatively late survival is true of other creatures now extinct. The mere fact that savages appear to have been the earliest inhabitants of Europe is far from proving that such as they were the fore-runners of civilized races everywhere. Our American tribes were preceded by superior races, and ~~should one from the simple discovery of Esquimaux skeletons on our own continent infer that they were the ancestors of later immigrants, he would jump~~ at no more unwarrantable conclusion than some European scientists have done in regard to their own continent.

It would be foolish and unjust, however, to assert that there are not difficult problems bearing on the origin and dispersion of the human race yet to be solved. Geology and palæontology have their appointed work to perform, and evolution may be a factor that can not wholly be rejected.

Still, from reasons already mentioned, and which would gain strength by a more detailed presentation, it seems obvious that the claims of physical science to be the interpreter of all mysteries can not be allowed. It leaves unexplained moral phenomena, and with them the life of history. If man has had nothing but bodily training, and no teacher but his environment, all these thousands of years, the testimony of his consciousness and the records of the past must be set aside.

We have not entered the field which science holds independently of history. Our survey covers only the territory occupied in common. Having summarized the arguments of the physicists, it remains to hear the other side. Man's mind, as well as his body, has something to say.

#### THE VOICE OF HISTORY,

We have seen that historical testimony is generally veracious; at least, that it is founded on fact. Is it supposable that the sum total of evidence—general tradition—is less trustworthy than its parts? There are certain widespread beliefs that have come down from the earliest ages of which we have any record. In most of their forms there is a large accretion of fable, but the different witnesses, without the possibility of collusion, agree in several important points. There was a primitive golden age, or Eden. The serpent and the tree of life; the ruinous error of a woman, be she Eve or Pandora; the weekly division of time, and the story of the deluge, are more or less clearly incorporated in the majority of ethnic traditions. Further, we find that the different heathen faiths were most nearly monotheistic at the start; becoming gradually more corrupt and degenerate. There is not a prominent nation on earth whose authentic or semi authentic history does not begin within a period of 8,000 years before the Christian era, with the possible exception of Egypt, the chronology of which is still

in dispute. Whether that kingdom was founded 3,000 or 6,000 years before Christ, it was fully civilized when first known, as were the great monarchies with which it contended for the supremacy at a later period. Of the immensely long antecedent dominion of gods and demi-gods claimed by Manetho it is not necessary to speak.

The newly established science of Ceramics, if we may dignify by that title the study of pottery, also affords evidence of the recent origin of civilized man. Dr. Prime, no mean authority, says:

"We will not pause to discuss theories of the origin of the race. Art study is a study of facts; and where theory is employed, it is, as it always should be, merely a tool to be used in investigation and thrown away unless investigation changes it from theory to fact. A schoolboy's theory is worth as much as a Newton's until proved, or disproved, by investigation. All study in every department of human art begins at a period not long after the Mosaic deluge. All art history, when traced toward its beginning, is found to commence at a time less than 5,000 years ago. There is no work of human hands, no result of human thought ever known, whose date is fixed at more than 3,000 B. C. The earlier dates assigned by some able men, in contradiction of equally able men, to the Egyptian monuments of the ancient dynasties are theoretic. The converging lines in the histories of all human inventions and arts, in tombs, in architecture, in money, in forms of religion, in language spoken or written, above all in ceramic art, traced from their indirect divergence toward their place and time of origin, point to the western portion of Asia as the place where, and about 5,000 years ago as the time when, the history of man as read in his work must begin. The study of these arts, therefore, leads to the belief that prior to that time there were no men on the earth, or that a catastrophe of some kind had swept the major part of the race and their works from existence, and the remaining few began the history again in the western part of Asia."

It would occupy at least two or three afternoons to present even in outline the argument from tradition and mythology for the common origin and common primitive faith of man. It may be said, however, first, that each nation which has preserved any part of a tradition, not borrowed from another nation, is an independent witness; and second, that if there exists a more than ordinarily clear and reasonable embodiment of the tradition, it is to be received as the earliest. I am aware that certain men claim that these beliefs have an exclusively subjective origin, or are generalizations from and exaggerations of some local event, but I trust I have already made it plain that common sense is not the exclusive possession of modern times. When we find Alexander Von Humboldt quoting the 104th Psalm, and remarking: "We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such a limited compass the whole universe—the heavens and the earth—sketched with a few bold touches;" and adding: "Similar views of the cosmos occur repeatedly in the Psalms, and more fully perhaps in the 87th chapter of the Book of Job. The meteorological processes which take place in

the atmosphere, the formation and solution of vapor, the play of its colors, the generation of hail, and the voice of the rolling thunder are described with individualizing accuracy; and many questions are propounded which we, in the present state of our physical knowledge, may indeed be able to express under more scientific definitions, but scarcely to answer satisfactorily"—when this knowledge of the arcana of physical science existed there surely must have been the capacity to distinguish between imagination and observation, between fiction and fact. It would be very hard to convince the American people that they ought to celebrate the 4th of July as the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence if independence had never been declared, and ancient nations would never have submitted to burdensome ceremonials had not antecedent facts justified their adoption.

If it be said that the ordinary estimates of the periods of history—estimates which are rather approximations than definite calculations, however—are insufficient for the acting out of the human drama, the same want of time has been objected to the possibility of pure evolution. In his first New York lecture Prof. Huxley noticed the difficulty, but shoved it off his own shoulders, declaring that it did not belong to his department.

If the general cause of humanity has been spontaneously progressive, the fact is not apparent in the part of the roll of history open to our vision. Empire after empire has yielded to corruption and barbarism, and moldered away, but the challenge of Whately to cite a single example of a community that has risen from barbarism unaided by a superior nation has never been met.

Max Mueller is not infallible, but he has clearly shown in his current Hibbert lectures that the idea that feticchism is the primitive form of worship is unfounded. The earliest faiths known in history embodied some of the loftiest ideas, and so do many of the savage creeds of to-day. He says Africans who worship reptiles and adore gree greees exhibit "clear traces of a worship of spirits residing in different parts of nature, and of a feeling after a Supreme Spirit alike hidden and revealed by the sun and sky." \* \* \* Feticchism, so far from being, as almost every historian tells us, a primitive form of faith, is, on the contrary, a secondary or tertiary formation—nay, a decided corruption of an earlier, simpler, and truer religion. If we want to find the true spring of religious ideas we must mount higher. Stocks and stones were never the first to reveal the infinite before the wondering eyes of man."

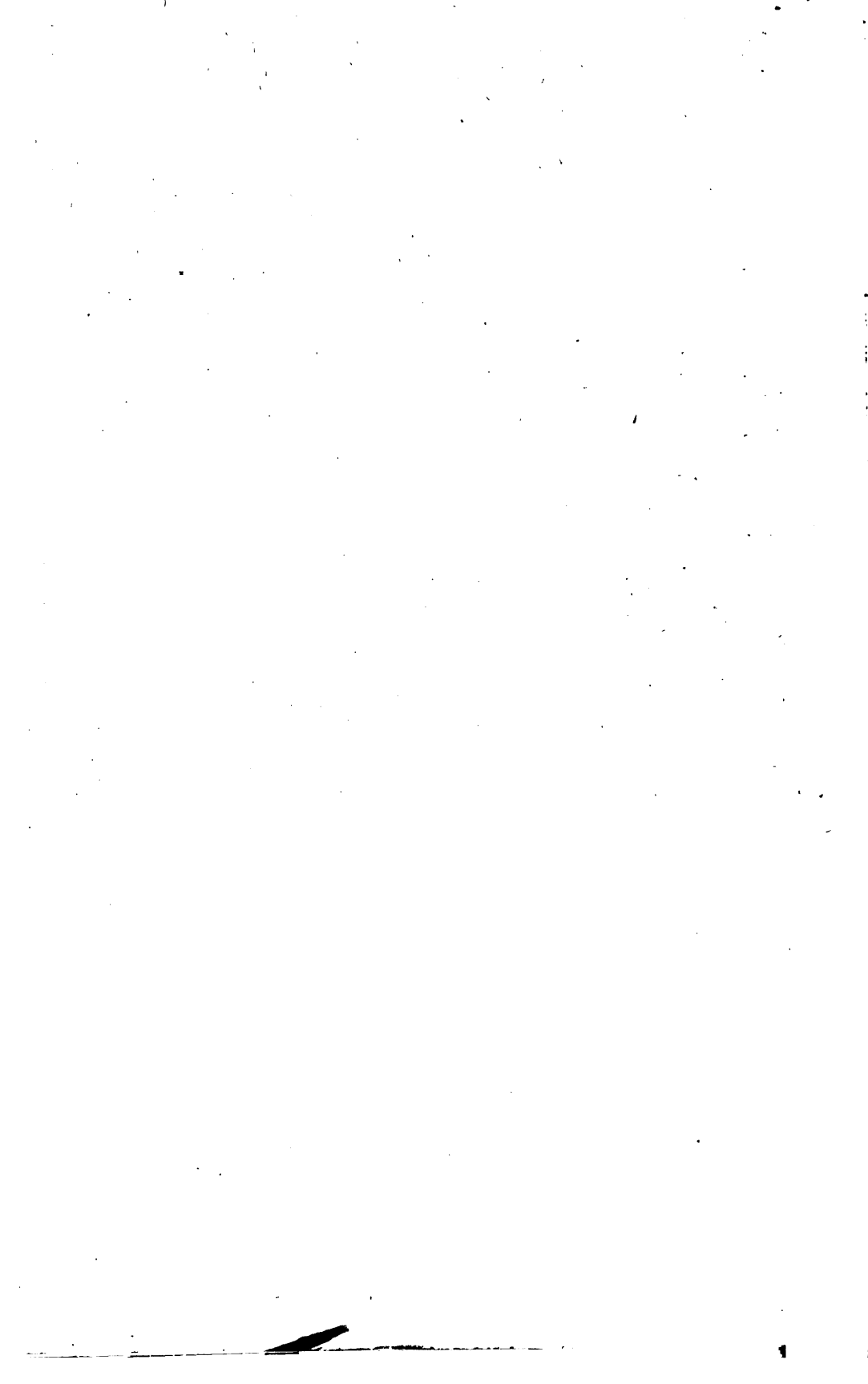
#### CONCLUSION.

This declaration of Mueller, in a department where he is entitled to speak with confidence, is hardly less conclusive than his former illustration of the impossibility of the utterances of brutes being developed into the voice of man. With his testimony we rest the case, not for lack of material, but for want of time.

If that which explains man's physical nature be science, certainly that which covers his moral, social and intellectual characteristics, interpreting his essence by their working under all circumstances and in all times, is at least equally worthy of the distinction. I have summed up the leading points of the evidence. It is for you to render the verdict for or against the Credibility of History.







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